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PUBLIC AFFAIRS PRIORITIES IN HIGH-PROFILE CONTENTIOUS COMMUNITY SITUATIONS

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Revised 4-21-16

This is a general template to give you a sense of the structure of the communications process. Here are seven key goals with objectives, strategies, and tactics. Adapt them to the needs of your program and process.

Goal 1: Aggressively Manage the Process

- Your role is to be the chief explainer of the entire effort.
- Your role is to be the manager of the people and the people-related components of the project.
- Your role is to generate and then manage the strategy.
- Your role is to create and carry the principle messages and to "animate" the process to facilitate understanding – internally and externally.
- Your role is to be the creator of the appropriate perceptions among critical audiences.

Objective:

To keep the process moving forward by always having a Plan B, C, and D in place.

Strategy:

- Explain issues, techniques, and tactics before the questions arise.
- Focus on the key messages.
- Mold perceptions rather than educate the public.
- Communicate directly with key audiences using vehicles you control, like video, direct mail, and newspaper advertising.
- Choose tactics that focus on the goal – eliminate distractions.
- Escalate your decisiveness to reduce instability and lack of direction.

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Tactics:

- Communicate through the daily newsletter.
- Be powerfully visible. Set the course and the policy; let others chair the committees.
- Create and use an effective, doable timeline.

Goal 2: Maintain and Build Critical Audiences

- Old audiences:
 - Area residents;
 - Township residents;
 - Township residents within the two-mile radius of the site;
 - Business leaders; and
 - Local and state political officials (appointed and elected).
 - Build your base audience of company employees and retirees.
- Expand and develop other natural audiences:
 - Senior clubs/civic groups;
 - Religious groups;
 - Senior citizen organizations; and
 - Fraternal organizations.

Objective:

To keep audiences most directly affected in tune with our concerns and theirs, and to be able to move them to action when necessary.

Strategy:

- Regular direct contact by mail and phone.
- Regular indirect contact through paid advertising, public appearances, the grapevine, and third party conversations.
- Provide feedback quickly to what is heard, said, and done.

Tactics:

- Build your base audiences:
 - Employees.
 - Retirees.
 - Create an organized group of retirees who would recruit and carry the message to the community through their activities. The retirees would also influence the behavior of those in the plant on these issues.

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- Create events where these audiences can mingle and develop relationships.
- Target old audiences:
 - Develop monthly letter (more frequently when decisions approach) describing the progress made.
 - Continue promoting applications for the Property Value Guarantee Program.
 - Maintain personal contact with key groups like the Chamber of Commerce.
- Develop new, natural audiences:
 - Recognize through announcements, financial support, or awards the work of key groups in the community.
 - Establish a benchmark survey in the awareness groups.

Goal 3: To Grow Personal and Corporate Relationships with Public Officials (local, regional, and state)

- Build personal relationships through:
 - In-person contact, telephone, and personal letter/clipping-type mailings; and
 - Tools that are developed to fit the needs of these public officials.
- Use surrogates where appropriate, but generally as a secondary source of contact or to open doors.
- Use existing pathways:
 - Technical contacts from within with state and federal environmental and other regulatory agencies;
 - Union leadership; and
 - Encourage and foster contacts to government and political organizations.

Objective:

To ensure that the right public officials know who your company is, what your company does, and what your company needs.

Strategy:

- Use the "Adopt-A-Politician" concept as the basis for a permanent plant-based program.

Tactics:

- Tie in corporate public affairs.
- Make regular direct contact with key county/major state officials.

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- Assign officials and politicians to other members of the plant team.
- Work to build key executive branch relationships, open doors, and generate feedback from state Capitol.
- Stay in touch using periodic (i.e., monthly) brief bulletins on issues, questions, and concerns.
- Respond to feedback immediately.
- Use natural contacts that exist between the plant, retirees, and business leaders.

Goal 4: Manage the Legal Process

This process includes:

- Township counteraction strategy in the event they cite us for zoning violations.
- Grandfathering under the new zoning plan.
- Site-related issues such as graves and historical concerns.

Objective:

Daily progress through control which reduces surprises, eliminates duplication, facilitates forward movement, and keeps individual legal efforts on their appropriate tracks.

Strategies:

- Use local counsel for local work.
- Use environmental counsel for environmental work.
- Use corporate counsel for overview, advice, and coordination with public affairs strategy.
- Set goals for each facet of the legal process.
- Encourage creative ideas, but control the focus of each legal team.

Tactics:

- Develop work plan for each team.
- Make daily contact with each team to review work plan and assess programs.
- Require written opinions and comments.
- Only hold meetings when absolutely necessary.
- Build consensus – decide the outcome of meetings before they begin.

Goal 5: Recruit Department Managers to the Fight

- Exercise positive leadership.
- Help managers look beyond the plant's problems. Victory lies outside the plant.
- Help managers simplify their own priorities, one of which *must* be the landfill process.

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Objective:

To put your plant management group on a war footing (designate "foxholes" for everyone because war is *not* a participative process).

Strategies:

- Through positive leadership and effective delegation, help department heads assume an appropriate role in this struggle.
- Raise their sights.
- Move beyond the past.
- Help them simplify their own priorities.

Tactics:

- Pick the tough issues and ask for volunteers.
- Assign those who don't volunteer to the issues that are left.
- Participation in "Adopt-A-Politician" should be mandatory.
- Recognize achievement and participation.
- Take the managers into your confidence because they can't come in on their own.
- Ask each manager for one constructive suggestion or alternative per week from his area for conduct in the war.
- Forecast outcomes, i.e., "Yes, we're going to lose this election, but let's do so as narrowly as possible."
- Play the "what if" game constantly.

Goal 6: Manage the Most Urgent Issues First and, Where Possible, One at a Time

- Continue explanations of why a landfill is needed and how the process is progressing.
- Continue promotion of the Property Value Guarantee Program.
- Continue the search for technical truth by asking the tough questions and not tolerating surprises or resentment because of the way things were done in the past. Win by moving forward. If the technical team won't or can't work, replace it quickly.

Objective:

To maintain control and direct the evolution of issues.

Strategies:

- Anticipate the questions and answers early.
- Challenge all proposed technical solutions and alternatives.

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- Ask the unaskable.
- Talk in terms of rationally evolving solutions rather than rigid, ultimate answers.

Tactics:

- Continue aggressive communication regularly and directly with key audiences on landfill issues.
- Communicate first with your plant audiences.
- Continue progress on the Property Value Guarantee Program plan.
- Make a deal with the bank.
- Continue advertising for participation.

Goal 7: Continue Building a Community "Relationship"

- Continue to request meetings with the local officials.
- Implement "Adopt-A-Politician."
- Contact major audiences directly and least once a month.
- Use paid advertising to explain, clarify, or set the public debate. Keep the other side honest.

Objective:

To continue generating overt and explicit communication and support on our behalf.

Strategies:

- Focus on participation when you ask members of the community to do something.
- Always ask for a response in writing or in person.
- Emphasize simplicity, concern, caring, understanding, feelings, common sense, fairness, and the right things to do.
- Stress the need for the community to talk back to your company. Communicate that you want to hear community needs and concerns.
- Use "please" and "thank you" a lot.

Tactics:

- Use "Dear _____" cards wherever the plant manager goes...in speeches, in letters, etc.
- All paid advertising should contain the "Dear _____" coupon.
- Be visible in powerful settings.
- Affect rather than set the agenda of others.
- Begin plant tours to show people what you do.
- Take community leaders and base audience members to similar sites elsewhere to further demonstrate "what's in it for them."